

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-21 and 23-31 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1, 3, 12, 13, 23, 24, 26 and 29-31 are amended, and claims 2 and 22 are canceled.

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 since the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance for the reasons discussed herein; (b) do not raise any new issues requiring further search and/or consideration; (c) do not present any additional claims; and (d) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Applicant appreciates the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 2, 3 and 22-30. By this Amendment, the features of claims 2 and 22 have been incorporated into claims 1 and 12, respectively, and claim 3 has been amended into independent form.

The rejection of claims 1, 4-21 and 31 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over Okabe et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,128,104, has been rendered moot.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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